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SUBJECT: ELECTION RESULTS: SOMETHING GAINED, SOMETHING LOST
BUT MOSTLY A TIE

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SUMMARY

1. (U) In Italy's EU elections, the governing coalition obtained a total of 45.4 percent of the votes, compared to 46.1 percent obtained by all parties on the center left. The remaining 8.5 percent went to other smaller parties, mainly center-right oriented. The center-left now holds 37 seats, instead of the previous 38 in the European Parliament, and the center-right 36 instead of 39. The remaining five seats went to the Emma Bonino list (two), and one each to Alessandra Mussolini's Social Alternative, the Pensioners Party, and the Tricolor Flame Party (a descendent of the former Fascist Party several times removed). (Note: With EU expansion, Italy lost nine EP seats, currently holding 78.) Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Deputy Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini received the most votes nationwide, while DS President Massimo D'Alema and former TV anchorwoman Lilli Gruber outpolled Berlusconi in their respective districts. Only one region (Sardinia) voted for a new government, and here the center-left took over from the center-right. The first round of local elections gives little indication of the final winners' tally, because in provincial and mayoral elections, the center-left and center-right have thus far largely kept what they already had. The June 26-27 run-offs may highlight differences, but for now, the hue and cry appears to be greatly exaggerated - not much of a surprise in Italian politics.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESULTS

2. (U) Compared to previous EP elections, Forza Italia (FI) lost more than four points, obtaining 21 percent against the previous 25.2 percent. National Alliance (AN) gained a little with 11.5 percent against the previous 10.3 percent, and Union of Christian Democrats of the Center (UDC) increased markedly to 5.9 percent from the 4.8 percent earned previously by the Christian Democratic parties, which combined to form UDC. The Northern League (Lega) gained slightly -- five percent against the previous 4.5. The United Socialists/New Socialist Party led by former Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis, now with the center-right, won two percent. This gives the center-right a total of 45.4 percent against the previous 44.8 percent.

3. (SBU) "United under the Olive Tree," aka the "Prodi List," did not shine, earning 31.1 percent; in 1999 EP elections, individual parties in the list obtained a total of 32.5 percent. Far left groups all gained: Communist Renewal (RC) celebrated its 6.1 percent against the previous 4.3; Greens also gained with 2.5 percent against 1.8; and the Italian Communist Party (PDCI) slightly increased its ground with 2.4 against 2.2. Additionally, the Di Pietro-Occhetto list, a left-leaning party running for the first time, got 2.1 percent. Added to this grouping are also the Sudtiroi Volkspartei (SVP) and Union Valdopain (UV) (two minority linguistically-based groups from Northern Italy), which did not obtain any seats, but their 0.6 percent allows the center-left to show a vote total of 46.1 percent.

4. (U) On the outskirts of the two major groupings are the Bonino list, whose 2.3 percent represents a significant downfall from the party's 8.5 percent showing in 1999. Alessandra Mussolini's far-right Social Alternative took 1.2 percent from two other extreme right parties, Social Movement and Tricolor Flame, which previously had a combined 1.6 percent and in these elections garnered only 0.8 percent.

5. (U) Due to proportional voting, which seeks to guarantee representation by smaller groups, a candidate with only 2,641 votes, such as Tricolor Flame member Luca Romagnoli, will get a seat in Strasbourg, while Prodi List candidate Ferdinando Latteri (17th in order of preferential votes received) will not be elected with 151,253. The candidates who received the most votes nationwide are Berlusconi and Fini, who ran in all five EP districts.

Reviewing the five districts separately, candidates who received the most votes in their districts are, in order, D'Alema in the South, Gruber in the center, and Berlusconi in the North-West, North-East, and the Islands.

16. (U) Elected candidates who cannot legally remain in their current office while serving in the EP (i.e., national

level elected leaders) must choose which position they will accept/retain, generally within a month. This means that members of the Italian Parliament who accept a newly-won EP seat will have to be replaced. Italian parliamentary elections use mixed direct and proportional voting. Supplementary elections will be held to replace departing parliamentarians who were elected directly by majority vote, while those who were elected proportionally will be replaced by the next candidate on the party's list for the 2001 elections. In the case of candidates who retain their Italian position and forsake the EP post (as Prime Minister Berlusconi has said he will do), the next candidate on the party's list for the EP in these (2004) elections will be named.

REGIONAL

17. (SBU) Sardinia, the only region electing a new government, chose Renato Soru as its president ("governor"), although a few ballots remain contested. Soru, an independent backed by a center-left coalition, is currently shown with 50.16 percent against former FI Regional President Mauro Pili's 40.47. (In previous elections, Pili obtained 48.1 percent of the votes.) It will take at least a few weeks for the new Sardinian regional government to organize itself, although Soru is already working to pull together his team. The regional government does not have direct control over decisions regarding construction plans by U.S. Naval personnel using Italian bases in Sardinia. However, Soru campaigned on an "ask the Americans to leave" platform; his election will make diplomatic and outreach programs by and on behalf of U.S. personnel in La Maddalena and Santo Stefano more challenging. It may also make the Italian government, which does approve U.S. Naval plans, more skittish about follow-through, at least in the short term.

LOCAL RACES

18. (U) Much of the Italian and some foreign media has reported a smashing victory for the center-left, which won in 38 of the 63 provinces, while the center-right won in three. An analysis concentrating on those provinces that changed hands between center-right and center-left, however, provides a slightly different perspective. Only two provinces registered a changeover, Cuneo (in Piemonte) and Taranto (in Puglia). The center-left took Taranto from the center-right, and the reverse occurred in Cuneo. Much the same thing happened in the thirty provincial capital cities electing new mayors and city councils. Before elections, the center-left held twenty of these cities, and the center-right ten. In the June 12-13 elections, the center-left won outright in eighteen cities, and the center-right in six. Mayors for the remaining six cities will be decided in June 26-27 run-off elections. (Note: Some cities changed hands, so that the 18 now held by the center-left are not all part of the 20 it held prior to elections. The same is true on the center-right.)

19. Run-off elections for these six municipalities and for 22 provincial governments will finally determine left-right breakdown. The six cities are currently split evenly between the center-left and center-right. Our analysis suggests the two coalitions should still retain three cities each after the run-offs, but not the same ones. (If true, the center-left will increase by one its hold on the provincial capitals, which held elections this year.) Early predictions suggest that the center-right will win in most of the northern provincial races, a result made more certain by the Northern League's June 17 agreement to run together with Forza Italia in the local run-offs. (Note: In the 1999 elections, the center-right parties ran separately. As a result, most of the northern provinces went to the center-left.) In total, then, the center-right looks poised to win in some 12 provinces, and the center-left in two, assuming repeated high voter turnout. Eight provinces remain too close to call.

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